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The Psychology of Special Abilities and Disabilities. By AUGUSTA F. BRONNER, PH.D. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company. 1917. Pp. vi, 269.)

The human mind is very prone to require downright yes or no answers to its interrogations. Is Johnny normal or is he feeble-minded; will he learn like other boys or will he be inserted in an institution? A helpful corrective to this routine-breeding simplicity in educational matters is found in Dr. Bronner's analysis of nearly fifty cases of backward and delinquent children of exceptional makeup whose difficulties and psychic characteristics have had thorough clinical study. The author is assistant director of the Juvenile Psychopathic Institute of Chicago, over which Dr. William Healy, author of "The Individual Delinquent," presided.

Among normal but backward children are many who, it appears, are unfortunate enough to be handicapped by specialized defects in one or more of the mental processes; these defects, by preventing the mastery of particular subjects, throw their whole school life into confusion, subject them to continued retardation, confirm them in the conviction of failure, tempt them to truancies and delinquencies, and in the end rob society of well-disposed and serviceable citizens. On the other hand, among the higher grades of the feeble-minded there are individuals with really good abilities in one or perhaps two directions; but these abilities remain quite unperceived in the general imbecility of their natures. By failing to exploit some saving endowment in such youth we deprive society of competent members, in the economic sense at least.

The clear inference from the expert testimony adduced in these cases is the necessity of a thorough "educational diagnosis" of all children who find unusual difficulty in doing school work. This brief but scientific account of special abilities and disabilities should be read especially by the practicing teacher and the school officer through whose hands this little army of the Not Wholly Fit is hourly passing.

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